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Cree Syllabic Hymn Book
by James Evans

Norway House, 1841

Publication 8

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CREE SYLLABIC HYMN BOOK

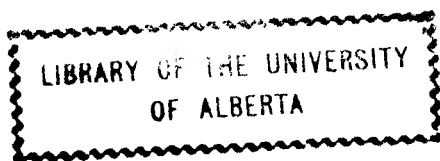
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CREE SYLLABIC HYMN BOOK

by James Evans

[Norway House, 1841]

Publication 8

Toronto, Canada
1954

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INTRODUCTION

The *Cree Syllabic Hymn Book* reproduced in the following pages is unique in the annals of Canadian typography. It was printed in 1841 by the Rev. James Evans at Norway House, Hudson's Bay Territory, on a converted fur press. The type used had been cast from lead obtained partly from the lining of tea chests and partly from bullets. Only three copies of the little book are known to have survived. All are in the Library of Victoria University, Toronto, to which they were presented in 1910 by Miss Sophia Evans (now deceased), daughter of the Rev. Ephraim Evans of London, Ontario, and niece of James Evans.

The *Hymn Book* is the earliest book extant that is known to have been printed in the Canadian Northwest. It is probable, however, that this 20-page edition was preceded by an earlier version consisting of only 16 pages. A tradition persists that this first edition was printed on birch bark. In his biography entitled *James Evans, Inventor of the Syllabic System of the Cree Language* (Toronto, 1890), Dr. John McLean states that Dr. Ephraim Evans "has now in his home in London, some of the original type made by James Evans from tea lead and bullets. He has also some old books made of birch bark and others made of paper." Yet in neither of two letters written by James Evans to his brother about the time the *Hymn Book* was printed is any mention made of birch bark. Writing from Upper Fort Garry on June 11, 1841, he says: "I have made a fount of Indian type — press and everything necessary and have printed about 5000 pages in the Mushkego language. Among other things, a small volume of hymns which is bound — 100 copies, of 16 pages each." And in his letter dated August 2, 1842, he remarks: "I am sending you a few of my home made types and a specimen of printing . . . I dare say my book is without 'register', the form is none of the best. I had a very bad 'devil' and much of my type ought to 'go to hell'."

This description might apply with equal accuracy to the copies now in the possession of Victoria University. The text of all three is identical, but there are slight differences in paper, binding and cover. All are printed on coarse paper. In one instance, however, the paper stock is more primitive than in the other two, and as this particular copy happens to be badly worn, its appearance could give the impression that it is printed on birch bark. Indeed, it is conceivable that the whole birch bark story stems from the condition of this copy.

The early date at which it was printed, the romantic circumstances of its production, and the fact that it contains the earliest known printed examples of the Cree syllabic script invented by James Evans in 1840, make this humble little volume a book to be treasured.

James Evans, the translator and publisher of the *Cree Syllabic Hymn Book*, was born in Hull, England, in 1801, and emigrated to Canada in 1823. He was converted at a Methodist camp meeting in 1826 and was

given charge of the mission school at Rice Lake, Upper Canada, in 1828. There he began a study of the Ojibway language. In 1831 he was appointed to the Credit Indian Mission, and in 1834 to the St. Clair Mission, where he was outstandingly successful. In 1836 he completed a syllabic version of the Ojibway language which he submitted to the Bible Society in Toronto, but which was rejected. He then published, in 1837, *The Speller and Interpreter, in Indian and English*, a grammar of the Ojibway language, and translated hymns and portions of the Scriptures into Ojibway. In 1838 he was sent to initiate missionary work on Lake Superior with Thomas Hurlburt and in 1840 the Wesleyan Missionary Society in England appointed him Superintendent of Missions in the Hudson's Bay Territory, which extended from James Bay to the Pacific Ocean. It was in connection with his missionary work in this Territory that he invented, in 1840, the Cree syllabic alphabet, based on his earlier syllabary of the Ojibway language. Here, too, he gathered about him translators and Indian helpers who were ultimately responsible for the first edition of the Bible in Cree syllabic, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1861.

James Evans remained at this post for six years, during which he travelled many thousands of miles by canoe and York boat, to direct the missionary activities under his superintendency. He was recalled to England in 1846, where he died suddenly on November 23 of the same year, after addressing a missionary meeting at Keelby, Lincolnshire.

The original version of Evans' Cree syllabary is reproduced on the front cover of his *Cree Syllabic Hymn Book*. It consisted of ten characters (later reduced to nine) in four positions, each position representing a vowel sound. One of the nine characters in the four positions represented the vowel sounds in open syllables, while the other eight represented the consonants as combined with these vowels, in the position designating each vowel sound. There were in addition a number of smaller characters, denoting terminals or aspirates, which were placed above or beside the syllabics to which they pertained. In all, about 49 characters were employed in this syllabic alphabet, which gave a written language that could be adapted for all branches of the Algonquin languages and for other Indian languages as well. In the twenty years from 1841 to 1861 the Cree syllabary won its way through all the Algonquin Tribes and gave a new stimulus to the work of translating and printing. Bishop Horden of the Church Missionary Society adapted it for the Moose Cree in 1851, building on the foundation laid by George Barnley, a Wesleyan missionary at Moose Factory from 1840 to 1848, who had learned the scrip under Evans, and in 1871 Father Lacombe adopted it for use in the Catholic missions.

For the translation of the *Hymn Book* I am indebted to the Venerable Archdeacon Raymond B. Horsefield, of Flin Flon, Manitoba, an authority on the Cree language. Archdeacon Horsefield, coming from

England as a young man, graduated in 1926 from Emmanuel College, at the University of Saskatchewan, and was ordained as a priest in 1927. He spent his early ministry in the diocese of Brandon, serving Indian communities. In 1942 he became rector of St. James Church, in Flin Flon; he conducts a regular broadcast in the Cree language from the radio station there.

Archdeacon Horsefield's translation reveals the contents of the volume to be as follows: Pages 2-14, hymns; pages 15-20, Scriptural texts, including the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes. The hymns were undoubtedly the favourite Wesleyan ones of the period, freely translated into Cree words and idioms that would be within the range of the vocabulary of the Indians and of a person having an elementary knowledge of Cree. In some cases they have been so freely adapted that it is most difficult to identify the originals. The hymn that comes first in the book, *Jesus my All to Heaven is gone* (pages 2-3), was also the first ever printed by James Evans. Its initial appearance in Cree syllabic type had been on a sheet of birch bark. The English text was written by John Cennick, a teacher in John Wesley's school at Kingswood, England, who later became a Moravian. The first verse, in English and in a Cree translation, reads as follows:

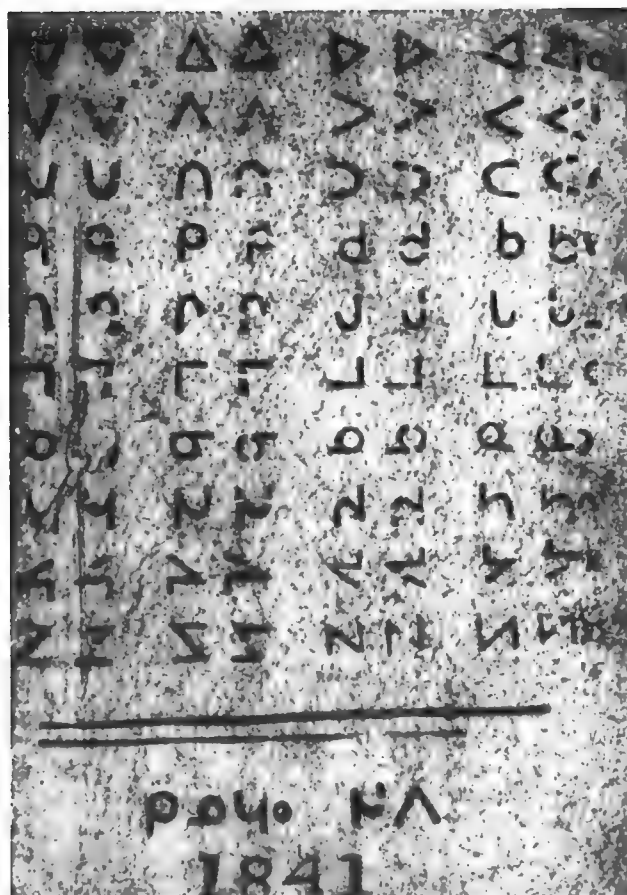
Jesus my all, to heaven is gone,	Jesus net itāyimoowin
He whom I fix my hopes upon;	Ispimik ka ke itotāt
His track I see, and I'll pursue	Weya piko ne mumisen
The narrow way, till Him I view.	Nesta ā we itootāyan

Two other old favourites included are *Behold the Saviour of mankind*, by Samuel Wesley, Sr. (pages 8-9), and *O for a thousand tongues to sing*, by Charles Wesley (pages 10-11).

Archdeacon Horsefield has commented on the Evans Cree translation as follows: "The vocabulary of the author is pretty extensive, but his syntax is poor: he uses plural nouns with singular verbs, and vice versa, is uncertain of word order and (not unnaturally) lost among some of the more complicated forms of the truly weird and wonderful Cree verb." This is only to be expected when it is remembered that the *Hymn Book* was published less than a year after James Evans began his study of the Cree language, and before the earliest Cree grammar (that of Joseph Howse) was published in 1844. Under such circumstances the fact that it can be translated so readily by a modern Cree scholar is almost as remarkable as the ingenious manner of its publication.

MARGARET V. RAY.

Victoria University, Toronto,
November, 1954.



eh	ay	i	ee	o	oo	uh	ah	w
peh	pay	pi	pee	po	poo	puh	pah	p
teh	tay	ti	tee	to	too	tuh	tah	t
keh	kay	ki	kee	ko	koo	kuh	kah	k
ch eh	ch ay	ch i	ch ee	ch o	ch oo	ch uh	ch ah	ch
meh	may	mi	mee	mo	moo	muh	mah	m
neh	nay	ni	nee	no	noo	nuh	nah	n
seh	say	si	see	so	soo	suh	sah	s
yeh	yay	yi	yee	yo	yoo	yuh	yah	kh
speh	spay	spi	spee	spo	spoo	spuh	spah	(r,l)

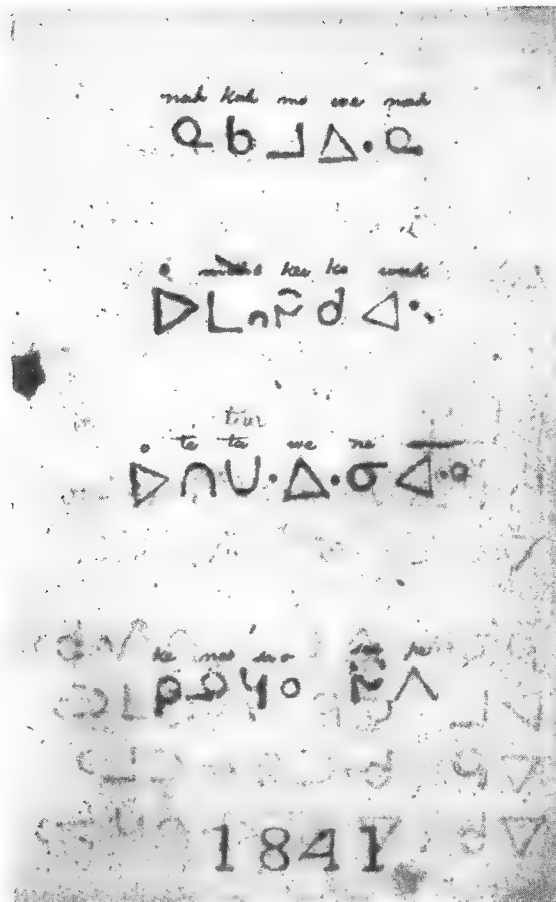
** Fish River

1841

* (Translator's note as in pet, pay, pin, pea, foot, moon, pun, part, watch.)

** - i.e. - Norway House, Man.

[Front Cover]



HYMNS
SWAMPY INDIANS
Their Speech

Fish River

1841

ρδ... ΔC ∇∩Λαβ
 ▽L σρ Λ<J(α)
 ▽ρ b.C9σC(α)
 ▽b ∇ Γ<1.∩N>

Long where it is dark
Here have I walked
Suffering
For I was not good.

ΓΝ. ΡΟΛ ΡΗΓ.
 σβ Δ. < Δ. < Δ. < Δ.
 σβ Δ. < Δ. < Δ. < Δ.
 Ρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.

The very poor
I want to show them
I will point out to them
Look ! Here is the way.

▽b. ▽CN<
 ρρ ρ<·CJ
 bCQ>C7
 ΓN▽. ▽.bΓ.
 θnnθΔ. Δ·NU
 ρρ ρρ ρ<·CJ

ρh. Lσ>Δ.
 ρρNΔN
 b·C9σC7.
 9Q▽σC7.

ρh. LΓρΓ.
 bΛL·NΔ▽.

Now all of you
 Be very glad
 To hear this
 Throughout the world:
 Light comes to you
 Be very, very glad.

Jesus who is God
 Ill-treated Himself
 Sympathize with Him
 You who would please Him.

Praise Jesus
 Who saves.

[p. 4]

▽Γ× ▽Γ× ▽ρ
 b h ▽. σΓ ▽.

σρ JNσ<
 b·CρNΔσ.
 ▽b9.bρD
 Γσ>CδΔ.

ρQΔ. Δ.ΛΓ×
 b ▽ b<·C7
 b3~ ΔNCL9.
 bρΓσδΔ.

▽ b. Q>CJ
 Γσ>ρJΔ.

By His blood, by His blood
 Who blesses all.

My brothers
 In trouble
 Come try to escape
 He does well for you.

You, Above
 Who strove
 Christ promises
 To give to you.

Now listen to
 The Gospel.

[p. 5]

9 5. C V. C H.
9 A L O N 4.

5 D N Δ C. b p a o
A L O N N R.
σ I R b Δ I N (2)
b h Δ. σ Γ L x

b a z j. < Γ (2) Δ D
D L < V Δ. L x
p a. A L N Δ Δ. L x
Δ. A V σ Γ (2)

Entirely believe
That you may live.

He who made us all
Who are living
We will implore
That You bless us.

Look on us now
Walking here
You the Saviour
Be our Lord.

[p. 6]

Δ A Γ A σ O C A (2)
< d y σ L x
a Δ. Δ. Γ σ d N =
h Δ. σ Γ A Δ.

p L b < L O σ
Γ Δ. σ Γ A Δ.
V p a q σ C I Δ (2)
h Δ. σ Γ p Δ.

Δ b. V p r L Δ L
Δ. A O L Δ. (2)
H z ~ D Γ Δ. σ Γ A Δ
b C Γ z j. C L x

We look above
I hope
To be given
A blessing.

We cry to Thee
For joy
Make us to know
A blessing.

Now Holy Ghost
Throw to us
Christ's blessing
That we may be glad.

[p. 7]

44. $\rho \rho \mu \subset L \cap$
 $\triangleright \cap \alpha \quad \sigma \cup \cup \times$
 $\cap \cap \langle \cdot \cdot \cdot \Gamma \times \alpha \sigma \Gamma \cap \cap \cdot \cdot$
 $\Delta \cap \Delta \quad \triangleright \cup \quad \sigma \Delta$
 $\cup \cdot \cup \quad \Delta \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \rho \cdot \cdot \cdot \cup \cdot \cdot \cdot$
 $\nabla \cdot \cdot \cdot \quad \nabla \quad \langle \cdot \cdot \cdot \mu \cap \cdot \cdot$
 $\cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \rho \Delta \cdot \cdot \cdot \cap \sigma \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot$
 $\Delta \cdot \cdot \cdot \Delta \cdot \cdot \cdot \mu \cdot \cdot \cdot \Delta \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot$

ΛCΘ ΔΥΤ.ΕΛ)
 ΓΡ ΔΥΝΟΣΟΔ.

Already I surrender to Thee
Take my soul
See Him bow His head
As He dies.

But soon He rose
Now He shines bright
Truly He suffered
Wanting to save mankind.

**If only, I thought,
My fellow men**

Qa b J C J, Δ. 5.
P R Δ A L N Δ V.

P Y L C Δ. R Δ
P R V < < J C L
P V C b x Δ L Δ p x
Γ N Δ d Γ b Δ. 5

P h Δ N C b N Δ.
C V. P R Γ C b.
b L R Δ N V. A R,
P O A C < b Δ d.

b L R Δ N R q r
Δ. < q r C Δ. Δ b.

Would now thank
The great Saviour.

God, help me
To tell abroad
In the dark places of the earth
My great adoption.

Jesus' name
Truly sounds so sweet
Let the sinner
Be wise.

The evil-doers
Soon He heals

[p. 10]

P h b J C J, Δ. 5.
q v P N 5 σ L L x

σ A R V M R C C
Δ. R q A L N M R
b P N L q σ J R
q Γ R Δ. 5 N M R

b a < < Γ x b p q
b Δ. σ N R b N 5
P R C V C < < d
q A L N 5 Δ b.

V J U b. C P N 5
V < σ Δ. 2 A N 5

By Jesus' blood
My soul is holy.

Ye who die
Take note
How you may live
Ye poor, become rich.

Look all you
Who go astray
That you may believe
And so live.

Come ye sufferers
Ye defeated [?]

[p. 11]

ρ ε > Γ δ Δ . ο Δ > L
ρ β υ ν σ υ ρ Δ . ο

Λ σ > σ η ν ι η Δ
ρ ρ Δ . ο > Γ C δ

Λ C σ Λ σ > Δ β
β > η β ρ α β β
C η C ο

σ C > β Γ Γ x
Γ > L σ > Δ
σ > η x Δ β - σ Λ >
β ε Δ > C η η

He calls you
You shall rule.

God sends me
To call you
Get ready then
Christ has prepared everything.

He warns me
God does,
Lest my soul die
To look to Jesus.

[p. 12]

Δ . ρ Δ α η η
β C Δ . > C L x
σ β η ρ σ υ ρ Δ . ο η η
β C Δ > η β C x

ν . ο α η Δ . ο ν Δ . > σ
ρ Δ η β β ρ η β ρ
σ β Γ > Δ . ο υ η
L η η ν η α δ η η
Δ η β α δ η C σ α η
ν C L η η η

Help us, Jesus,
To do this
We always long
To serve Thee.

When Thou comest to judge
At the last day
Shall I be glad?
Who am like a worm
Sometimes in danger of dying
While I live.

[p. 13]

52 DL 7620 C
 V. Δ. Γ. Α. Λ. Ο. Ν. Δ.

[p. 14]

[p. 15]

UVσ"r q' ▷α>C=
L q Δ."

Δ" C Δ. α > Δ. Λ Γ x Δ.
Δ. Δ. b C p u σ" r =
b u σ" p n m σ" b n Δ.
p n v σ" r q Δ. b C =
C d n Δ. L b. Δ Δ U =
σ" C L. b C p m r b =
U Δ L Δ. p x C Λ m σ -
Δ d u x Δ. Λ Γ x. Γ =
σ α > Δ. b p m b.
b v p m σ r r Δ. σ α =
α. Γ α Δ. Λ α L Δ. α >
σ L r Δ m r q Δ. σ α =

α Δ Δ N Δ. Λ α Δ. Δ.
p r r Δ σ p b L r Δ.
Δ. Δ. Γ. r. α b σ b x
L r Δ N Δ. Λ m Δ. σ x
Δ N Δ. σ Δ. p. Γ C q =
σ α > Δ h < C m Δ =
h x Δ Δ Δ p. p α L
Δ. α p n v σ. U Δ p.
L Δ. Δ. Γ α b p r Δ.
Δ. N Δ. Γ α p u =
σ" C d n Δ. b p q Γ =
α b p q < Δ Γ?

Δ. Δ. < L. Δ Γ. Δ N Δ.

The Lord's Requesting.

Our Father who art above

Thy name be honoured

Thy kingship arrive

Thy will be acted upon in this earth
as there above,

Give us to-day our clean food
and cast away from us our evil doings

[p. 16]

As we cast it away from them who do harm
to us.

Avert from us when we are going towards evil
ways.

Put it away from us to be in ... ?

For Thou ownest the kingship, and the strength
and the honour, for ever and ever. Amen.

Seeing the multitude He went up

[p. 17]

σΔ. Δ.ρ. Δ.ρ. ρ.
 ΔΔ. ΔΖ. ∇h b.
 αΔΛ. ∇ρ ∇λnδ
 Δρρ. ΔΔ. Δ. b. Δ.
 δM. Δ.ρ. ∇σ. ρ.
 ρρ. ΔΔ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 M. ρ. Δ. Δ.

h ∇. σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 ρρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.

h ∇. σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 ρρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.

σ. ρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 h ∇. σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 b. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 ρρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 h ∇. σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 σρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 α. b. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 ρ. b. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.

h ∇. σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 ρρ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 b. σ. Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.
 Δ. Δ. Δ. Δ.

on top of the mountain and when
 He was set His disciples came unto
 Him and He opened His mouth and
 taught them saying thus

Blessed are the poor in their spirits
 those shall have the kingdom above.

Blessed are those who think poor

they shall be of good heart.

Blessed are those who are gentle
 in their ways, they shall govern
 the earth.

Blessed are those who are hungry
 and thirsty for right dealing,
 they shall be filled up.

Blessed are those who think mercifully
 for they shall be mercifully thought of.

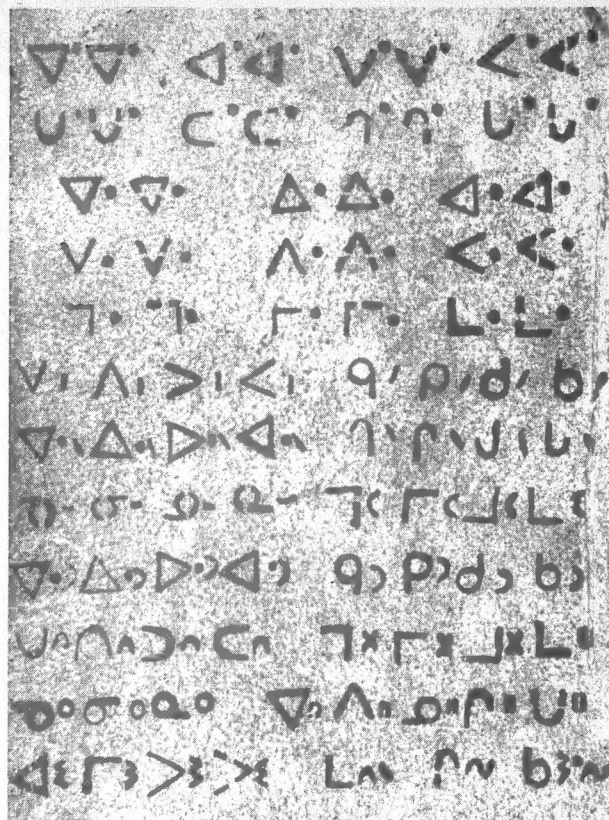
ḥṽ.σ.ε.δḥΔ. Δσ
 ṽḥρṽ.ṽṽ. Δḅ.σ.
 9.ε.ε.ε.ε. ρḅ.σ.
 ε.ε.
 ḥṽ.σ.ε.δḥΔ. Δ.
 σ 9.ε.ε.ε.ε. Δḅ.σ.
 ṽḅ.σ. ρḅ.σ. ε.ε. Δ.
 ε.ε.ε.ε. 9.Δ.σ.
 ḥṽ.σ.
 ḥṽ.σ.ε.δḥΔ. ε.ε.
 ρ ḅ.ε.ε. Δḅ.σ.ε.
 Δ.ε. Δ.ε. ε.ε.ε.ε.
 Δ.ε. ṽḅ.σ. 9.ε.ε.
 ε.ε.ε. Δ.ε.ε.ε. Δ.ε.
 ε.ε.ε.

Blessed are those who are clean hearted
they shall see God.

Blessed are those who make to sit
peaceably together they shall be called
the children of God.

Blessed are those who for righteousness
are tormented they shall have the
chiefship Above.

[p. 20]



1.	weh	way	wuh	wah	pweh	pway	pwuh	pwah
2.	tweh	tway	twuh	twah	chweh	chway	chuuh	chuah
3.	weh	way	wi	wee	wuh	wah		
4.	pweh	pway	pwi	pwee	pwuh	pwah		
5.	nweh	mway	mwi	mwee	mwuh	mwah	mweh	
6.	pehp	payp	puhp	pahp	keht	kit	kot	kut
7.	wehk	wik	wok	wuk	chek	chik	chok	chuk
8.	nech	nich	noch	nuch	mehm	mihm	mohm	muhm
9.	wehn	win	won	wuhn	kehm	kin	kon	kuhn
10.	tehs	tis	tos	tus	mekh	mikh	mokh	mukh
11.	newh	niw	nuw		eh pi	nó	chi	tây
12.	ahl	mir	poor	pool	musk	pwuh	kuhrist	(Christ)

Editor's note:

The back cover, reproduced above, contains an elementary reading lesson in syllabics.

The translator draws attention to the character c, on line 11, which denotes an aspiration of the vowel it follows, and which he indicates by a Greek "rough breathing" sign on the appropriate vowel.

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